

MEDIA, PA – To recognize Gold Star Mothers Sunday, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) paid tribute to this extraordinary group of women who have lost their sons and daughters in service to our country. Congressman Sestak, who served in the Navy for 31 years rising to the rank of 3-star admiral, is the highest ranking former military officer to serve in Congress. Today, he called for a renewed commitment that, as a nation, we never forget the incredible sacrifices made of our Veterans families, without whom we could not have a secure America.

“Gold Star Mothers represent the very best of our nation,” said Congressman Sestak. “There can be no greater personal tragedy than losing one’s child and my thoughts and prayers are with all of the parents of children who have died in service. Today all Americans should pause and give thanks to Gold Star Mothers across our nation for their remarkable courage and conviction, as they have carried on the memories of their children through continued acts of patriotism and selflessness. The values they promote serve as an example for all Americans to follow.”

Since Grace Darling Seibold lost her son in WWI, there has been a movement in our nation to find the best way of recognizing the excruciating pain felt by mothers who lose a son or daughter in service to our nation. On May 28, 1918, President Wilson approved a suggestion made by the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defenses that, instead of wearing conventional mourning for relatives who have died in the service of their country, American women should wear a black band on the left arm with a gilt star on the band for each member of the family who has given his life for the nation.

Today Service Flags displayed from homes indicate that family has a member who is serving in the Armed Forces or who has died from such service. Service flags have a deep Blue Star for each living member in the service and a Gold Star for each member who has died.

“With our nation at war on two fronts, it is vital for us to remember that it is a uniquely small number of American families who are shouldering the responsibility of fighting and winning conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and maintaining our other commitments around the world,” said Congressman Sestak. “We are blessed to have in the 7th Congressional District a very vibrant and caring Blue Star Mothers Chapter led by Marian Moran of Delaware County. Those wonderful women are there to offer our Gold Star Mothers the care and support they deserve. Recently it was my great honor to attend a tribute for SSG Marc Small, U.S. Army, killed in February in Afghanistan and again express my thanks and condolences to his mother, Mary MacFarland, who epitomizes the ideals of Gold Star Mothers from WWI until today. Through her hard work there is a monument to her son in Lower Providence Montgomery County that reminds us all of the contributions and sacrifices of her son and family.

“We should use this day as an important reminder of our obligation as a nation to recognize the sacrifices that the family members of our military members and Veterans have made for our security,” said Congressman Sestak. “Generation after generation, American families have instilled in our youth special qualities that have allowed us to prosper and there is no greater example of that than our military families.”

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*